DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

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IMAGE CHANGE

West German Press Wakes Up and Reports Realistically on GDR

For many years, the West German propaganda machine has been grinding out an image of the German Democratic Republic as a country of starvation, despair, and decrepit breakdown, plus any other negative features you care to imagine.

With a few honourable exceptions, the West German press has gone along with the campaign. With the increasing number of West German visitors to the GDR (over five million have visited some part of the Republic for shorter or longer periods in the past three years), this distorted image has been increasingly hard to hold. In recent weeks, a whole series of West German newspapers have found themselves forced to take another, and a clearer look at the real state of affairs. Below we present a selection of extracts from recent articles on the GDR printed in the West German press and written mainly by journalists who visited the Baltic Coast during the "Baltic Peace Week" in July. Most of the articles still use the old Cold War jargon: "Middle Germany" and "The Zone" instead of GDR, but they are united by one factor: they are trying to break the news gently to their readers that the GDR is prospering, and a factor which has to be taken seriously.

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A visitor who was last in Rostock two years ago has the impression today that the city has become friendlier. This is not so much because of the new houses which have sprung up in the meantime, but because of the people. They seem freer, better dressed, less oppressed, rather more satisfied... Supply difficulties have decreased to such a degree that in a little while nobody will bother to speak or write about them. There is plenty for the table – not everything and not all the time – but there is much more than a few years ago. But there is one feature of the economic improvement which cannot please the visitor: many people are beginning to accomodate themselves to the fact of partition. Custom is having its effect, the internal pressure appears to be less. People are fitting themselves to the facts.

"Frankfurter Allgemeine" (Conservative), July 7th

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Things are getting better in the Zone (GDR, ed.), and this can be seen in the shops. You can buy TV sets and washing machines, motor scooters, and even a car after a waiting period of one or two years. In the Rostock area earnings are obviously good; the new harbour and the shipbuilding industry has a high priority in the economic plans. A touch of 'economic miracle' is to be felt, and if you want to take things ironically you could say this is true, since what the population have created is largely something they have managed to do despite the economic system.

RIAS (West Berlin American-financed radio), July 9th

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Many people in Rostock are making every effort to adjust to the system. They are better and more colourfully dressed. But the cut of the clothes and the hair styles betray their secret longing for the west. They laugh and joke, and political jokes are no longer told behind raised hands.

The people seem to be less sullen and happier, now that they can fulfil many of their wishes, since housing is going up at a rapid speed, and since nerves are not so strained by so many little worries of everyday life. Champagne has become the symbol of the rising standard of living in Middle Germany (GDR, ed.).

"Frankfurter Rundschau", (Social Democratic), July 11th

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For four years I had not visited this country. Last time I was there the chaos of agricultural collectivisation had converted the countryside into a dreary waste... The country seemed to be condemned to slow decline. But today there are shy attempts at colour. Neon signs can sometimes be seen, there is a little bit of luxury here and there, and teenagers wear seamless nylons. TV sets are available without any waiting list, there are vacuum cleaners and electro-razors.

Nobody should think that anybody is hungry in the Zone, though the little extras are still missing: oranges, better cigarettes, French soap, good perfume ...

The students are hard-working. They study with a determination bordering on self-sacrifice. They are cross at being sent to help get the harvest in, but they are happy to have got a place at university, and the stipends they receive are sufficient to get them through the month quite well.

The Socialist Unity Party would be well advised to make concessions. In agriculture it would appear to have done so. Young experts, keen supporters of the Socialist Unity Party, are already bringing in good harvests from the agricultural production cooperatives. They have even managed to convince the sons of those peasants who at first withdrew crossly to the corners of their living rooms; they are developing, one

might almost say, a certain ambition to turn 'their' farms into model farms.

"Süddeutsche Zeitung" (liberal), July 15th

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How is the man in the street getting on in the GDR these days? How does he live? How does he dress? What is his flat like? These are the questions that I want to try to answer in this article on the unknown Germany. To begin with a summing-up: the economy and the society of the GDR are no longer suffering from hunger oedema, but at the most from faulty circulation. Our picture of the state of affairs in Middle Germany is outdated; that is why we make so many mistakes when addressing our compatriots there. I was given a lesson on this right at the beginning of my stay in Rostock.

In the "Cafe National" in Rostock I took a seat at a table already full, and I had my first lesson in all-German beer-table politics. "It's a good thing that you have come here" said one of my neighbours at the table. "It's a good thing for journalists to come. You may ask why. The answer is that you should bring your reports and commentaries on the so-called 'Zone' up-to-date a bit. Most of them are talking about the day before yesterday."

"How do you know?" I asked. "We can hear them on the radio", was the reply.

On the Western Pier in Warnemuende I found myself next to a pair of 17-year-olds, listening devoutly to Gigliola Cinquetti singing "I am too young to love you". The young man told me the music was coming from Radio Luxemburg. His transistor set had cost him 405 marks, but you could get one for 195 marks, he said. You see many young people with such portable radios, and it is clear that people who have money over for such purchases cannot be living on the edge of starvation.

Materially the Middle Germans are better off than a few years ago. Bananas and some other goods are rare, but there is only a real shortage of some luxury items.

"Neue Ruhr-Zeitung", July 16th

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A woman of over 60 said: "Things aren't so bad. Earlier it was bad, but today it is much better. We've got enough to eat, we don't need any more. The social services are good. Take my own case; I have diabetes. I need a lot of expensive drugs, and our Republic pays for them; it isn't like that in West Germany."

The social insurance system in the Soviet Zone consists of free medical treatment, sick pay, pregnancy grants, burial fees, pensions for the old and for dependents... Persons persecuted by the National Socialist regime are looked after even if they were not insured.

"Offenbach Post", July 16th

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The most interesting thing for a West Berlin visitor who can take the first look at the other part of Germany for some years, is meeting people. One seldom hears complaints; on the contrary you hear ever and again that "many things are better" than three, four or six years ago, and that "all-in-all" nothing is missing.

Prices are still a problem for the Middle German citizens... Many things which are quite normal goods with us are still real luxuries in Middle Germany...

Naturally there are also things which are cheaper than in the West. This is particularly true of rents. Bread too is cheaper, and meat and meat products cost about the same, though the range is not so great.

"Telegraf" West Berlin (Social Democratic) July 19th

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With regard to textiles things are lagging a bit behind world standards. The bikinis are even a little scantier than on western figures, but then they have larger figures to cover. There is plenty of colour and variety, but the final touch of fashion is missing. On the whole, however, seaside life over there is just as colourful as in the West. There is scarcely anything missing, from big straw hats to sandals, rubber animals, fashionably short beach jackets, and air matresses.

In the clothes the holiday-makers wear on the promenades they show their real character: solid, unassuming middle-class. The cut and the quality of the clothes has in the past few years approached western standards, and in some cases reached such standards.

On the faces, the well-nourished faces, even too well-nourished, only a prejudiced observer can avoid seeing a look of contentment. And the younger they are, the more contented. They sit in the corner cafes and eat strawberry cake. The children, healthy-loking and nicely dressed, eat huge ice-creams.

"Hannoversche Allgemeine", July 22nd

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Everywhere I went I looked first at the shop-windows, which had certainly not been specially decorated for me. I was astonished that the bakeries and cake-shops were wonderfully filled everywhere. It must be a curious vanity of the regime to be one of the leading powers in the field of cakes.

"Bild Zeitung" (right-wing), August 8th

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I had interesting, fruitful and very frank discussions with younger and older officials and with Rostock citizens. I found many opponents of Ulbricht, but in one thing they were citizens of the GDR: they were proud of the growth of their city, proud of everything they had built. "And remember, we had no Marshall Plan, and we had to pay the reparations for the whole of Germany" they said...

This is a different Germany: different uniforms, a parliament without an opposition, already a different language, different "perspectives", and a population which, though largely critical, has become loyal.

"Vorwärts" (Social Democratic), August 8th

Another Nazi for Bonn's London Embassy

The West German Government has named Freiherr Reinhold von Ungern-Sternberg as new second-in-command of the Bonn Embassy in London, with the rank of Minister.

Ungern-Sternberg joined the Nazi Party on May 1st 1933 with party membership number 2,594,983. He was also a member of Berlin group 33/2 of the brown-shirted Storm Troops. He served from 1935 until the end of the nazi period in Ribbentrop's diplomatic service. Returning to the Foreign Ministry as soon as the West German state was formed, he served as Bonn Minister in Teheran from 1960 until his transfer to London.

The West German Ambassador in London is Hasso von Etzdorf, who also joined the Nazi Party in 1933. Herr von Etzdorf held the rank of lieutnant colonel in the nazi Storm Troops, and served throughout the war as Foreign Ministry representative with the nazi Army High Command.

NEVER AGAIN!

Democratic Germany Appeals to the World

On August 1st, 50th anniversary of the outbreak of World War One, the National Front of the German Democratic Republic issued the following "Declaration to the Peoples of the World":

Imperialist Germany instigated the First World War. German troops brought death and destruction to many countries in Europe. The German generals had to acknowledge defeat after four years. Of the 65 million soldiers involved, 10 million were killed and 18 million wounded. This predatory war cost Germany alone 147 thousand million marks.

Twenty-five years later, it was again a German government — this time under Hitler — which instigated the Second World War. German troops again over-ran the frontiers and carried war into almost every country in Europe. This war again ended in disaster for Germany. The results were far more terrible than those of the First World War. 55 million people were killed; Germany lost a tenth of its population; the war itself and the damage it caused cost the nations 1,350 thousand million dollars.

Who was to blame for all this?

The First World War broke out because the German imperialists aimed at world domination. They talked of "a place in the sun", but what they meant was a forcible redistribution of the world. Large parts of Belgium and France were to be annexed, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and parts of Russia were to be conquered, a dominant position was to be obtained in the Balkans and vast colonial territories in Africa were to be seized; in this way the German monopolists, big landowners and bank magnates intended to gain possession of huge quantities of raw materials and natural resources and to assert their claims to world domination.

The failure of this first attempt did not teach the German people a lesson. The revolutionary working class, the most consistently democratic force, was crushed by the generals and their mercenaries with the connivance of the right-wing Social Democratic leaders, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois political parties, and deprived of the fruits of its struggle. The reaction was not overthrown and was able, a quarter of a century later, to plunge the German people into new aggression.

This time the Soviet Union was declared Enemy No. 1 and was to be brought to its knees and delivered over to German big business, bankers and big landowners. German imperialism was to spread all over Europe.

The result was again disaster for Germany, a disaster for which the German people and the peoples of Europe had to pay,

- Thus the lesson to be learned from August 1st 1914 is that German imperialist and militarist rule cannot be reconciled with the interest of the German people or with the nations' desire for peace.

We in our part of Germany have thoroughly learned the lessons of the two world wars. Under the leadership of the united working class, in alliance with the farmers, intellectuals and progressive middle classes, a peaceful Germany arose in our part of Germany after 1945. Those who represented German imperialism and militarism and all active supporters of the nazi regime were removed from power. This did away with the basis for a policy of national arrogance, conquest, suppression and plundering of foreign countries and peoples. The people set up the foundations for a democratic, peaceloving German state, whose inviolability has once and for all been confirmed by the Friendship Treaty of June 12th 1964 with the Soviet Union. Thus the German Democratic Republic is now, in the 16th year of its existence, a stable factor for peace in Europe. It will do its utmost to prevent a war from ever again starting on German soil.

In West Germany, on the other hand, events took a different course after 1945. Here, under patronage of the Western Powers and with the help of the right-wing Social Democratic and trade union leaders, a German state was set up whose policy was again determined by monopolists and militarists. In breach of the Potsdam Agreement, the Bonn government separated the Western part of Germany from the body of the nation so as to assure that at least in one part of Germany imperialism and militarism could be revived. A new army of aggression was built up, West Germany was incorporated in NATO and is now trying to gain control over the use of atom weapons.

This has given rise to the danger that a third world war may start from German soil. German imperialism has always been unscrupulous, aggressive and unpredictable and even today would not hesitate for a moment to plunge the nations into a new war if it had the means and the opportunity to do so.

The most important lesson of August 1964 is, therefore, that so long as the fate of the nation is still, even in one part of Germany, in the hands of big business, bankers and militarists, the physical existence of the entire German nation and the peace of Europe and the world is in danger.

The people of West Germany in particular should take note of this

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and do their utmost to hold back the forces driving towards a war of revenge and to prevent any kind of atomic armament of the West German Bundeswehr. The conditions under which Germany can live at peace are detente and disarmament, understanding and cooperation between the two German states.

We urgently appeal to the nations today to support our efforts and those of all peaceable people in Germany to prevent a third world war.

The post-war period is drawing to a close. It is time to draw a final line under it. A turning-point in history is approaching which can and must bring the world a stable peace — not a new pre-war period.

Three measures would today be sufficient to prevent Germany from again disrupting such a peace:

1. The establishment of atom-free zones in Northern, Central and Southern Europe. These could ban atomic death from our continent. But if West Germany were allowed control of atom weapons, or if a multi-lateral atomic striking force were set up, this would simply be playing into the hands of those who were responsible for two world wars by giving them the means to start a third.

2. Recognition of both German states. Such recognition, and normalisation of relations between both German states and all the countries of Europe, Asia and the Americas, would be a great service to peace. Acceptance of Bonn's claim to be the sole representative of Germany would, on the other hand, only increase the lust for power and the unscrupulousness of the West German generals and their backers.

3. Signature of a peace treaty with both German states which would confirm and guarantee the present German frontiers. Any encouragement of Bonn's demands for a "restoration of the frontiers of 1937" can only give revanchist politicians an excuse to continue with their preparations for war.

We appeal to all nations, to all men of good will to help us to get these measures carried out.

When we recall the 55 million who died in the Second World War, when we think of the vast cemeteries scattered throughout Europe, and when we observe the renewed preparations for war now going on in West Germany, we must re-double our efforts to preserve peace in Germany, in Europe and throughout the world.

War is not the result of a mysterious stroke of fate. It is made by man and man can also prevent it. We have today not only the will but also the power and the opportunity to prevent it.

Taking Another Look

By Lieselotte Thoms

(In September 1949, a young woman reporter of the big East Berlin newspaper "Neues Deutschland" visited the factory doctor at the big rolling mills in Hennigsdorf, and an account of her visit was published on October 8th 1949. Now she has been back to have a look at the changes: here are some of the main points from her latest article, published by "Neues Deutschland" on August 16th 1964.)

I have just been back to Hennigsdorf, with my fifteen-year old story in my handbag, and quite a lot of memories. In 1949 the factory doctor, Dr Adolf Küpper, had given me white overalls and said proudly:

"Two years ago we started here with a pair of scissors and a tweezer, and now we've got a proper first-aid station and even overalls for visitors." At that time workers from all over East Germany were coming to the factory, which was being re-born from the ashes; the staff had risen from 2000 to 4500 in one year and was still growing.

In 1949 they were glad to have a functioning first-aid station. Today they have a mass of the latest apparatus, three full time doctors, and specialists from the nearby town attend regularly at the factory polyclinic. The medical work is not simply confined to treating people who have fallen sick or had accidents; a large part of the work is devoted to creating better and healthier conditions in the factory, reducing dust and noise, and so on.

Sister Ingeborg Neufert shows me through the polyclinic — the x-ray department, the dental department, the massage department, and finally the newly-opened "over-night sanatorium" (where less-serious diseases can be hospitalised during off duty hours, and the patient can still do his daily work, ed.). This is nicely furnished, with a TV set in the club-room, and a big refrigerator in the kitchen.

"I have been nurse here for eight years now", Sister Neufert tells me. "There has been a complete change in the situation. When I first came, the work of reconstruction was the central point, and the health services were rather marginal. Today we are gaining more and more influence in everything that goes on in the factory."

After a good look at the polyclinic, I set out to find Dr Küpper, who received me fifteen years ago. He is 67 now, and nominally retired, but he still works in an honorary capacity on various medical commissions, and his retirement often looks more like an eight-hour day.

"Do you know how we got the money to start building that polyclinic at Hennigsdorf?" he asks me, when I finally track him down. "But perhaps you had better not write about it."

"We'll see" I say, and start to take notes.

"We wanted to start building, and there was not a pfennig available" says Dr Küppers. "Then someone gave me a tip. Our factory always handed in the social insurance deductions to the central office immediately after pay day; other factories were not so prompt. We simply delayed paying in the dues by one month, and found we had 250,000 marks to start building.

But then Dr Küpper turns to more serious things. "In the 15 years life of the German Democratic Republic the whole question of medical work in the factories has developed from simple medical care to specialised medical supervision of the whole staff at their place of production. When we started, for instance, we had to concentrate on treating as well as we could people hurt in factory accidents; today our main task is to guard against accidents happening. This meant that the number of accidents has steadily decreased."

And when Dr Küpper tells me this, I remember that he talked about a development like this when I interviewed him 15 years ago. I did not write it down then, perhaps because I felt that everything possible was already being done for the health of the workers, perhaps because I could not really imagine this future of which he was speaking. After all, it was 15 years ago, and even a journalist never ceases to learn.

Footnote: Accidents at work have steadily decreased in the GDR over the past years, falling from 56 per 1000 in 1952 to 46 per thousand in 1963; in the same period they have risen in West Germany from 106 per thousand to 129 per thousand.

Fifty Years Back (Part 2)

Round the Berlin Press in 1914

What were the German newspapers writing about fifty years ago, as the Kaiser's Armies marched out at the beginning of the First World War? On this page we present a small selection of articles, serious and not so serious, from the Berlin press of 1914. Headlines and news items are faithful translations from the original German.

THE CROWN PRINCESS IN CECILIENHAUS

At midday today the Crown Princess appeared with her eldest son at the hospital established in Cecilienhaus by the Patriotic Women's Association of Charlottenburg . . . She spoke with each one of the wounded warriors, all of whom are filled with the burning ambition to return to the front, and confront the enemy, of whom they have little good to say. Prinz Wilhelm, with juvenile enthusiasm, distributed wonderful roses and fruit from the Royal Gardens, and presented each of the soldiers with a picture postcard with his mother's portrait.

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, August 29th 1914

NO PARTY STRUGGLE DURING WARTIME

The Reich Association for Combatting Social Democracy has dissolved itself, taking account of the national attitude of the entire German working class, which has received full recognition from the military side. The dissolution of the Association gives the lie to fairy-tales told abroad about the revolutionary ambitions of Social Democratic leaders; at this time of a German popular rising against a world of enemies there is luckily nothing of the sort to be seen. Let us hope that it will not be necessary to re-found the Association at a later date.

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, August 29th 1914

GERMAN PLANES OVER PARIS

The Reuter Agency reports from Paris that a German plane flew over the city, dropped two bombs, was shot at, but escaped undamaged. The day before yesterday Paris had a similar visit. Altogether three German planes have paid such visits. Vivant sequentes!

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, September 2nd 1914

GERMAN TIME AND GERMAN ORDER

German troops have brought German order and German discipline to Belgium... The German broom has begun with its clean sweep, and it will not cease its work until every corner is cleared, however unpleasant this may be for the Belgians... All clocks in Begium have been put back one hour, so that they now show German time; when the citizens protested, Governor General Freiherr von der Goltz replied that all Germany must have the same standard time... Further dispatches from Brussels report that Prince Joachim and Duke Ernst Günter zu Schleswig-Holstein are living in Hotel Astoria and Hotel Cecil.

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, September 1st 1914

NEWS FROM THE REICH CAPITAL

Frau Lieutenant-Colonel Pianka, who propagates Germandom in feminine hygiene, and who combats the xenophilia often encountered in this field, will hold a free lecture on her efforts this afternoon in the Auguste-Viktoria School...

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, September 3rd 1914

THE GERMAN ADVANCE ON PARIS

The French still remember well the Ulans from the year 1870, and these "wild tribes" as the Ulans were then described, particularly frightful because of their lances, have since become far more numerous; and they have lost none of their frightfulness. These frightful Ulans, with their speed, their irresistible recklessness, and their beflagged lances, are only the advance guard; behind them come the army with its 42 centimetre mortars, to the hoarse voices of which Paris must soon become accustomed.

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, September 4th 1914

ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE OF THE CROWN PRINCE

... In the villages of Luxembourg we are singularly affected by the sight of the men, who wear their hair long, and let it hang in their faces; they look fat rather than strong, and even those who work as peasants seem more town-folk than do German peasants. Nowhere is there a sign of that true-hearted serious nature to which we are accustomed amongst peasants who are in continual contact with the fruitful earth... There are many sullen faces. Our men in field-grey, with short-cropped hair and open faces form an extraordinary contrast to these plump men, standing around mostly with their hands in their pockets...

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, September 4th 1914

WOMEN IN WAR-TIME

The German Association of Authoresses wishes to provide emergency work for ladies and girls of educated circles, naturally mainly authoresses and artists who have become unemployed because of the war. Poverty is great in these circles, and help is urgently needed. The Association of Authoresses, at a recent "council of war" decided to obtain wool, and give out paid knitting jobs for the army: wrist-warmers, stockings, body belts.

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, September 4th 1914

FÜRST LICHNOWSKY

Fürst Lichnowsky, former German Ambassador in London, requests us to communicate that he has been given command of the First Army on the orders of the All-Highest, and that he has left by car for the theatre of operations.

Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, September 5th 1914

THE KAISER AND THE WOUNDED SOLDIER

A touching episode has been reported to us from Bad Ems: A young German soldier, Herr Wilhelm Markert ...

was wounded in battle in the right arm, and taken to hospital in Bad Ems, where the bullet was extracted by a good doctor. This happened on a Saturday on which Kaiser Wilhelm was in Bad Ems and visited the wounded. When Wilhelm Markert awoke from narcosis, the Kaiser was standing beside the operating table, and had a long conversation with him. This had been caused by the wounded man himself. Still half under drugs, he had called for three cheers for the Kaiser, and when he came round he found the Kaiser standing beside him. The Kaiser stroked his cheeks and head. All Bad Ems is speaking of the incident.

Der Montag, September 7th 1914

FROM THE REICH CAPITAL

In connection with the patriotic demonstrations in front of the Imperial Palace, which still continue, we are semi-officially informed: "The successes of our armies naturally awaken great enthusiasm, and cause excited crowds to gather to cheer the Kaiserin and the Crown Princess, cheering which continues late into the night. The All-Highest personalities are greatly pleased by this patriotic enthusiasm, but these demonstrations lasting into the night rob them of their urgently necessary rest. The charitable work of the esteemed ladies is very considerable, and they would be grateful for silent enthusiasm.

Der Montag, September 7th 1914

PRINCE JOACHIM WOUNDED

His Royal Highness Prince Joachim of Prussia was yesterday wounded by shrapnel... He has been transferred to the nearest hospital.

The sight of murderous warfare is terrible, but it also has conciliatory strength. In times of peace, the struggles between parties may escalate social differences into class warfare; but in the hour of danger there are no longer classes, no longer parties. In the face of enemy bullets all are equal, the simple worker and the son of the Kaiser... It seems such a long time since a deep gulf yawned between the Social Democrats and the Monarchy. But now one of the most important Social Democratic leaders has fallen, and a Prince of the Royal House has been wounded, both in the service of the same cause, both on the field of honour. This war has a power of conciliation, which will certainly last after the war is over.

Vossische Zeitung, September 11th 1914

INTERVIEW WITH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR

...The American Ambassador said: "Even to consider the possibility of a war between Germany and the USA is absolute nonsense. I am ready to bet one hundred to one that a state of war will never exist between the two countries. Anyone who believes the contrary has a fine opportunity to make money. I shall take any bets..."

Vossische Zeitung, September 11th 1914

The first part of this feature was published in GERMAN REPORT on August 7th

You Ask – We Answer
WHO SURVIVED CONCENTRATION CAMPS?

"I was always under the impression that the nazis killed practically all the people they put in concentration camps; but recently I have been reading some accounts of the Auschwitz Trial, and these reports make it clear that quite a lot of prisoners survived and can now appear as witnesses against the former camp guards. Could you explain?"

M. W., Aberystwyth

The confusion about the proportion of concentration camp prisoners who survived the nazi reign of terror is widespread. One reason for this confusion is that the nazis pursued various different aims in the concentration camps in differing places and periods.

1. Originally they used the camps as a particularly brutal form of prison camp, in which anti-nazis and other people potentially dangerous to the system were confined.

2. Later and particularly during the war the nazis used the camps as a reservoir of cheap and expendable labour.

3. They built some camps specifically as death factories designed for the sole purpose of killing groups such as Jews and Gypsies whom they wished to be rid of.

It was very difficult to sort out the different categories of camps and of prisoners, since the nazis themselves chopped and changed in their aims, and there were often conflicts between different sections of the nazi hierarchy; one section for instance, would be pressing for a stepping-up in the murder programme, while another section was trying to preserve as many prisoners as possible for use in labour projects. Generally speaking, however, all three sections of the nazi concentration camp programme were represented at one period or another in most of the camps.

This was particularly true for instance, with regard to Auschwitz, the biggest and most terrible of all the concentration camps. One section of Auschwitz was a very cruel and completely arbitrary prison camp, where death from brutality, disease and malnutrition was a daily occurrence, but where there was some chance of survival; another section was simply a slave labour compound, where reasonably fit prisoners were worked to death; and the third section was the "killing factory" where prisoners, mainly Jews, were herded straight into the gas chambers as soon as they arrived on the deportation trains.

A few camps, on the other hand, were solely killing centres. These included Treblinka, Sobibor, Maidanek, Belzec and Kulmhof (Chelmno) in Poland. Little is known about these camps, since they were simply slaughter houses, in each of which hundreds of thousands were murdered; there are practically no survivors.

The better known concentration camps such as Buchenwald, Dachau, Sachsenhausen, and the women's camp at Ravensbrück are much better documented, firstly because they were all in existence for many years, and secondly because there were thousands of survivors. Up to three-quarters of the prisoners who passed through these camps were murdered or died of disease and starvation, but many thousands lived to tell the tale.

No reliable overall statistics of the numbers of men and women who suffered in the nazi concentration

camps are available, but the figure ran into many millions. One reliable statistic is available which helps to show the different survival rates for "political" prisoners and "racial" prisoners. A total of 115,000 French political deportees were sent to various nazi concentration camps; nearly 40,000 of them lived to return to France at the end of the war. Almost the same number of Jews were deported from France to the concentration camps; only 2,800 of them survived. These were the handful who had been strong enough to work as slaves until the end of the war brought liberation.

There are a number of books available in good public libraries in Britain which give detailed information on the subject: the following may be recommended:

"The Scourge of the Swastika" by Lord Russell of Liverpool, London 1955.

"The Final Solution" by Gerald Reitlinger, London 1953.

"Harvest of Hate" by Leon Poliakov, London 1956.

FREE-LANCE ART IN GDR?

"I am a free-lance artist and would like to know something about art training and how artists actually earn their living in the GDR."

M. P., London

Here is a typical example of how young artists get a start in the GDR.

Bernhard Koban and Jürgen Weber, rising young artists who have already had two small exhibitions of their paintings and lithographs — one in Schwerin and one in Berlin — studied for four years on stipends, like 90 % of students in the GDR, at the Dresden College of Art. After that they decided to go and live quite simply in an out-of-the-way village near Schwerin in the north of the GDR.

"We felt we needed a change of air, right away from the Dresden atmosphere," Koban explained. "We thought we should get some completely new impressions on a cooperative farm (LPG). We chose the LPGs in Zierow and Beckerwitz because there are practically no artists in that whole area."

It was not at all easy at first, but they got a little money from the LPGs and a small commission from the Rostock district council to paint five pictures for a new school. Later on, when the farmers became interested in their work, the LPGs commissioned them to do some lithographs of life on the land, paying them with money out of their cultural funds.

But they had to live very frugally; accomodation was very poor and they had no equipment to start with. On a short visit to Berlin, they hunted through the trade directory and rang up dozens of printing shops until at last they found one willing to let them have an old lithographic press for next to nothing.

Their old college left them to sink or swim and, apart from organising a sort of introductory meeting in Zierow, the Artists' Association also left them to get on as best they could.

"But even taking the difficulties into consideration, we still feel, after more than three years in the country, that we did the right thing," said Weber. "We have learnt so much and have also been able to interest a surprising number of people in art.

"There are people who think an artist ought to have a second trade, so as to be sure of earning a living. I don't believe this is a good idea. An artist needs a great deal of time for his own work and he can, after all, only be a good artist if he is able to understand people and is receptive to their problems and thoughts. A second trade would not necessarily help him in this.

"But we do feel that students leaving art college ought to get down to earth and have to cope with the difficulties of everyday life. They should not just sit down in a 'ready-made nest'. What they do need, though, is some sympathy and encouragement at the start. We missed this very much at first."

"We certainly don't feel that we have wasted our time," Koban added. "The real test comes after training. And we have done dozens of sketches and gathered a great deal of experience about life on cooperative farms and about the problems facing people today."

The two young artists have just completed an eight weeks' refresher course — on a stipend — in the central artists' workshop in Berlin, under the guidance of an older artist — in their case Herbert Tucholski. They are the first to try out this new scheme organised by the Ministry of Culture.

"It is a splendid arrangement and I hope many young artists will be able to take advantage of it, to experiment and try out new ideas. We have learnt to make our own prints here, too, which will be very useful when we return to our village. We shall have to break out another window in our studio there, too, for we have been working in very poor light."

"Of course, we don't mean to spend our whole lives on the land," Weber added. "One can't permanently do without contacts with other artists, and we do need to go to the theatre from time to time and see really good art exhibitions. Up to now this has been a real difficulty, for money was short and we had not the time to spare."

But their initial difficulties are probably over now. They have a commission to design a mosaic wall for a new nursery school this summer and, since their work is really good and original, other commissions will certainly follow.

"Disappearing Prisoner" Pops Up

SS war criminal Hans-Walter Zech-Nenntwich, who escaped from a West German prison on April 22nd after being sentenced to four years imprisonment for his part in a pogrom in Pinsk in 1941, surrendered again to the West German authorities on August 7th. He has now begun to serve his sentence, and other charges in connection with his escape are pending.

The reasons for his return to West Germany from overseas exile are not yet known. Several theories are circulating in well-informed circles in Bonn. Here are some of them:

1. British, West German, and other intelligence services for whom he is known to have worked since the war have promised to get him amnestied quietly as soon as the fuss has died down. According to some reports Zech-Nenntwich has collected compromising material on some of his employers which he has threatened to publish if he is not properly "looked after".

2. ODESSA, the underground SS organisation in West Germany which is believed to have engineered his escape, had discovered that he had double-crossed them in some way. In order to escape the vengeance of this very efficient organisation, Zech-Nenntwich preferred to hide in a West German prison.

(Full details of the career of Zech-Nenntwich, and of ODESSA may be found in GERMAN REPORT, May 15th 1964.)

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

Older readers will recall that nazi No. 2, Hermann Goering, was famous for his uniforms and his art collection. Part of this collection was simply looted from the occupied countries, but other parts were collected by the Reich Marshal in Germany itself. His method was simple: he just let his friends know that he was interested in a certain picture in a public gallery or private collection; his friends passed on the tip to the right quarters, and to the great surprise of Goering, he found the picture on his birthday table or under his Christmas tree. It was a method which almost never failed, since everyone knew that if they did not produce the old masters desired, something very nasty might easily happen to them.

After the war, most of these "gifts" were returned to their rightful owners, if they were still living, but I discovered recently to my surprise that at least one of Goering's acquisitions was still in the possession of his family. It happened like this:

In autumn 1937, the picture gallery in Cologne got one of the ominous letters from Berlin, stating that Goering would be interested in "purchasing" a famous Madonna painted by Lukas Cranach. Somebody had got the facts wrong, and the desired picture was not in fact in Cologne, but this did not deter Dr Schmidt, the nazi Lord Mayor of the city from trying to get it for the Boss. His experts located the Cranach picture in Switzerland; Dr Schmidt sent the Swiss dealer a Van Gogh from the Cologne gallery in payment, and to nobody's astonishment, the Cranach Madonna shortly turned up at Goering's feudal residence, Karinhall. Goering's daugther Edda had just been born, so the picture was declared to be a present for her.

After the war, the Cranach, together with most of the rest of Goering's collection, was taken over by the Americans, and deposited in Munich. The majority of the pictures were claimed, but the Cranach could not be handed over, because there turned out to be four claimants:

1. The West German Government, which claimed that the picture had been "property of the German Reich", and thus fell to the Federal Government as legal successor.

2. The Bavarian Provincial Government, which claimed that it had been part of Goering's property, confiscated by Bavaria in a post-war denazification hearing.

3. The City of Cologne, which claimed that the presentation to Goering had been "illegal and contrary to good morals" and was therefore invalid.

4. Edda Goering, who claimed that the picture was her own personal property, and had nothing to do with her father at all.

All this was, of course, a slice of cake for the lawyers. A lower court awarded the picture to Cologne, a higher court cancelled the award, and after some more time-consuming legal actions and counter actions, another court once again awarded it to Cologne. But Edda Goering has not yet abandoned the struggle, and it is a struggle for high stakes, because the Cranach is thought today to have a sale-room value of about £ 20,000. On August 13th it was announced she had appealed against the court decision. She obviously feels that she has a good chance of keeping her hands on this piece of nazi loot, since the courts which must decide the case are largely staffed by judges who owe their careers to her late but unlamented father.

* * *

Hoaxers in many lands have often found satisfaction in trying to fool the press, particularly the more pompous newspapers. In the thirties, a ring of jokers in Britain had a fine time seeing how ambiguously obscene they could be in the classified advertising columns of the extraordinarily pompous "Morning Post", and only a year or two ago there was an underground competition in London journalistic circles to see who could get the most fatuous reader's letter published in a very stodgy weekly review.

I have had a feeling recently that something of the same sort must be going on in West Germany. It is the only moderately sane explanation for some of the more round-the-bend stories about the German Democratic Republic which appear in otherwise fairly sensible West German newspapers. If there is such a contest, the prize must undoubtedly go to the unknown humourist who prevailed upon "Die Welt" of Hamburg to print, as a fact, the story that West Germans were now sending supplies of tap water in cellophane bags by parcel post to relatives in the German Democratic Republic suffering from the current drought.

It may be the same anonymous japester who writes the Civil Defence leaflets for the West German authorities. A year or two ago West German ARP made its name with a leaflet suggesting that if you were caught in the open during a nuclear attack, the best thing to do was to lie down on the ground and cover your head with the brief-case which forms a part of normal German civilian dress. Amidst roars of black laughter, this particular pamphlet was withdrawn, but another pamphlet of the same calibre has now appeared. Here are two extracts which will show what I mean:

"(After a nuclear attack) the pedestrian will attempt to run to the nearest building which is not burning. How far he will have to run depends on the extent of the catastrophe; he may have to run half a mile."

"In the case of a sudden nuclear explosion, car drivers should stop immediately. The car should be brought to a halt in such a way that road crossings, etc., are not blocked."

But this useful leaflet unfortunately does not tell drivers what they have to do if the bomb drops while they are in a parking meter area and have not got the right coin to drop in a meter.

* * *

A week or two ago I had occasion to dine on successive days at good restaurants in East Berlin and West Berlin with a British gourmet who has been eating his way across Europe for the past forty years, generally on a generous expense account. In East Berlin we ate at the Neva Restaurant, and in West Berlin at Kempinski's; both of them are first class eating places, and we had almost identical meals at both places.

To the great surprise of my British guest-and-host, and I must admit to mine too, the food was marginally better in East Berlin, and the bill was considerably smaller. Meals in first class restaurants are of course no indication of relative standards of living, but the comparison was not without interest; and I got two very good meals.

* * *

The philatelists of the GDR are planning an international stamp exhibition in Leipzig in 1965: it will have the remarkable title of "Intermess".

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